

CIVILIZATION
&
RELIGION

AN ARGUMENT ABOUT VALUES
IN HUMAN LIFE

*The Rockwell Lectures on Religion
at the Rice Institute, Houston, Texas*

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To the Memory of
ARCHIBALD ALLAN BOWMAN
1883-1936

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS book consists of the Rockwell Lectures on Religion delivered March 25–27, 1947, at the Rice Institute. I am grateful for the opportunity and the privilege of giving these lectures and for the reception accorded them by an audience whose welcome and discriminating appreciation from the very first were something of an inspiration.

I profited greatly by a prior invitation from Princeton University to take part in the Bicentennial Conference on the Humanistic Tradition in the Century Ahead (Oct. 16–18, 1946). The material in the third lecture dealing with education was first presented at a meeting of that Conference.

Professor J. S. Fulton (formerly of McGill University) and Professor R. A. Tsanoff, both of the Rice Institute, had a share in the philosophic enterprise told of in the lectures. It was a pleasure to have the chance to acknowledge, in their presence and at their own institution, the value of what they contributed to the work done overseas.

There are some men and women who must remain anonymous in this page of acknowledgments—the students of philosophy at the Shrivensham American University in England whose words, written and spoken, I have used in quotation. I hope that many of those whose thoughts I have reported will see this publication and realize how highly we who worked with them valued what they said. They surely will not take it amiss if I here make known something of their philosophy, which is needed generally in the world today. I cannot help thinking, too, that men who have had such ideas will exert a beneficial influence in public affairs during the lifetime of this generation.

CHARLES W. HENDEL.

*June 12, 1947
New Haven, Conn.*

INTRODUCTION

THE term "argument" in the title is used as in Shakespeare, meaning the essential story of a drama, and, in this case, one that took place in the education of men, and some women, in our Armed Forces overseas. It happened at a United States Army University opened shortly after the victory in Europe and ending the middle of December, 1945. The scene was a former British Army post—pleasantly situated at Shrivenham, Berkshire, England.

There were three of us who went over from this side to undertake the unprecedented task of teaching philosophy in the Army. Another group went to a similar institution at Biarritz in France. In our university we formed part of a corps of 150 instructors who were drawn straight from civilian pursuits to serve with the Army. We maintained our own standards and methods of academic work.¹ This was what the men of the Army themselves wanted. They responded with a zest, an appreciation, and a will to learn that were unparalleled in the experience of any of us. There were 4,000 of those men who came streaming in from all sorts of units, and most of them were fresh from combat in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia.

In these lectures I am, in part, giving an account of what these men said and thought in the course of their study of philosophy. They had papers to write for us on some general topics and they often took occasion to express their own personal views in them. They were frank and

1. The members of the Liberal Arts Section will always remember gratefully the enlightened leadership and constant support given by Major H. W. K. Fitzroy, chief of the section, in respect to the decisions of academic policy or discipline that might make or mar the work of the whole program of education.

searching, too, in their direct questions about very important matters. We had many discussions, in class and out of it, day and night, and wherever we happened to meet.

The three of us from this side were reinforced over there by three additional teachers of philosophy then serving in the Army, for we found we had hundreds of students to take care of.² It was an arduous existence but it was also a joyful one. We found happiness in our work, and a fellowship, which it is hard to realize in ordinary circumstances.

There is more, however, than a memory remaining from those days. The argument of which I tell has been continued since with students of similar experience but who are now at home and proceeding with their education in a postwar world that presents the same questions, often in new and even aggravated form. In the third lecture I have stated my present thoughts on these matters: they form a sequel to the story of what transpired in those Army discussions.

2. Assisting us were Lieutenant John W. Dowling, Lieutenant John F. Wachob, and Sergeant Herbert R. Larson, whose intelligent interest, resourcefulness, and teamwork were essential to the accomplishment of our task.

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CIVILIZATION AND RELIGION

I

Man Knows Himself

THE thoughts of the men in the Army were those of persons in a unique situation. They were between two worlds, being out of the milieu of usual Army service and of the mentality that goes with it, and yet by no means in civilian life. In the first session men were still expecting to be sent to the Far East, since V-J day only occurred in mid-session. But of course their minds were turned strongly homeward, as they found themselves associated with teachers who had just come over, bringing with them a breath of the free air of life at home. "It was our first contact with American civilization," one of them afterward said. They were standing, as it were, on a pinnacle of experience where they could, at one and the same time, look back on the war and forward to the life at peace in the old, familiar scenes. They looked both ways and with a clearer vision, and vastly more perspective, than men generally have. With greater love than ever for America they were also more troubled by what they heard or remembered about things in our society. In many instances they no longer saw the same value in the business, the jobs, the kind of life they had taken for granted as satisfactory. They were often unbelieving and even fiercely critical. They were quite determined to see that the right political decisions should be made. They also had other convictions which had not yet taken form. They welcomed in our coming a chance to discuss their views and to go over their own questions about life, politics, education, society, religion.

What they had witnessed in war was never far out of sight. "I have seen too much of physical destruction," a technical sergeant wrote, "to be entirely clear-headed about these things. . . . I have seen for instance a beautiful cathedral entirely destroyed by bombs—and yet I know it wasn't *beauty* itself that was killed but only the building that embodied the beauty." That man was using Platonic language about beauty itself as an imperishable reality. Then he went on to ask: "Are not justice and goodness *eternally real* like that?" Another man told of his despair, and then of a conviction that took its place: "As to my opinion, whether it is hope, environment, or reason that leads me to believe that realities like beauty or justice do exist, I know not. I know that there are times when the multiplicity, the incoherence of the battlefield, have led me to throw up my hands and see only anarchy and senselessness in life; but once a more stable existence has been achieved, I return once more to that belief in the ideal. However, the nature of these 'forms' [Ideas] is not at all clear to me. I understand Socrates' line of reasoning, and it seems valid, but I really cannot commit myself irrevocably. I just don't know enough."

But they knew well enough what the real *evil* was. Many had been on duty at places like the prison camps at Dachau and they had seen evidences of the vile practices which had spiritually befouled the great nation whose external military power they had just had part in shattering. These men knew better than anyone the great costs paid in life and suffering to liberate the victims of inhuman oppression and slavery. That knowledge made them sharp and decisive in their assertion that certain universal principles of civilized living must be established throughout the world. The values of human life must be maintained everywhere. All people must be brought to a realization of pre-

cisely what it is in humanity that is worthy of highest regard.

These men loved their country so well that they would not have her false in any respect to the moral principles they believed essential to civilization. Many an evening after hours they carried on their examination of life. It might begin with conditions in Germany, and then pass to our policy there, and they decidedly rejected any vengeful, even a retributive, peace. They outspokenly condemned the way our official aims and policies, nobly enunciated, were perverted and falsified in their application by local commanders. But the subject soon shifted from ourselves in Europe to ourselves in America. They were angered at the evidences of race prejudice, the inequalities of opportunity, the selfish interests of industry and labor, the narrow partisanship in politics that sacrificed the good of the whole country. They were fairly well informed about public affairs and very deeply concerned.

They saw the problems quite close at hand, too, as problems of their own personal careers. What bothered them most of all was a difficulty about our ways of business. "I understand and appreciate all that Socrates says as regards the values of human life and the virtues of being just and righteous, but in our existence we are constantly reminded of competition with fellow men, and only upon brief occasions are mindful of the importance of a good life. . . . There are many examples of men who are forced by their position in society to forsake a principle. . . . Is it better to follow the teachings of your own heart and sense of ethics, or is it wiser to plunge into the competitive life with both arms out for all one can get? If I follow the first, I am liable to starve to death. If I follow the second, my life may seem very incomplete. Is it possible to find a happy medium?" Another put it thus: "How are we going to

start, in a world dominated by competition, to show *concern for the common welfare?*” Another asked the everlasting question: “Why should a man play according to the rules of the game when the majority of men are not observing these rules?” How can one live in the actual order and retain one’s own soul?

Nothing demonstrates their own insight better than an incident in the class in Principles of Philosophy. Some men had asked how it was possible to square the acts they themselves had had to do in war with the principle which Socrates had declared, that it is never right intentionally to do anything that is harmful or evil to any man. I suspected, wrongly perhaps, that the men who asked that question were being haunted by a sense of guilt, and thought that I could ease their minds somewhat by arguing that war is an action between whole states and that all citizens share the responsibility. Besides, our purpose is not to inflict harm or do evil but first to stop the evil-doing that is destructive to mankind and then to re-establish right. There was much more to the answer which is not relevant here, for the important thing is not what I taught but what they knew. After that lecture eight men pressed forward through the throng leaving the classroom and spoke respectfully but earnestly, making a real protestation: “Don’t *protect* us like that. The dreadful thing about war is the throwing over of all personal responsibility by individuals. Our men have not been taught principles and so they are irresponsible in combat and in other actions subsequently. *The most evil thing is to be divested of all personal responsibility.*” These are their very words which I set down immediately, as soon as I could get to my quarters.

This is a deep-going insight into a moral problem of our civilization. But there was a deeper concern still. Late

one evening, after an engrossing discussion that had begun with an examination of our policy about Germany, turned to the problems of American society, and then reverted again to the original theme, boxing the compass of the political and international issues, something broke through from the depths of a soul. They were a group of thirty-five men filling a very small room, talking almost in darkness about a small, flickering, uncertain fire, and hardly any face was visible, when suddenly a voice cried out, startling us, for it was almost in anguish: "Why are we talking about what we are to do in Germany? I am fighting myself, and I want to get through with it here." None of the other men showed the least surprise at that confession, though there was a momentary silence. They knew that inner battle, too, and they wanted to come out of it with peace of spirit.

Is it to be wondered at that they asked if we might devote some evenings to religion? A glimpse of the deeper movements of their thought is in this passage from an essay, the assigned subject of which had been neither war nor religion: "Even though something is itself destructive, men are inspired by it to behave constructively, to strive for good and shun evil. Wars are great tragedies but after every war men are inspired to bend all their efforts away from the terrible and towards the divine." "Away from the terrible and towards the divine."

I have let these men announce in their own words the two subjects of our argument: *civilization and religion*.

Socrates had already caught the imagination of these men. It was far more than his philosophy. They saw a life that had meaning and inspiration. He was a real presence to them, in those dialogues (the *Apology*, *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*) where Plato depicts the unforgettable

scenes of his trial, temptation, and death. They admired his stand for the right to inquire into truth and his refusal to escape from prison and save himself at the cost of his principles. They listened with respect to his words at the end when he gave his friends who were shaken in faith his own reasons for belief in the immortality of the soul and the reality of the divine. So often the language of translation and the archaic references to things far away and long ago have put students off Socrates, but in this case those usual obstructions to sympathetic understanding did not matter. The man Socrates shone through, life-like and convincing. Here was a philosopher ever so honest, asking the same basic questions about life. He had showed great courage both in battle and in the hard encounter of an independent mind with prevailing opinion and prejudice. He made brave decisions, eventually at the cost of his life. Here was no mere talk, but action. Thus Socrates' questioning and way of life together captured their serious attention. There were about 260 in all who studied those dialogues of Plato about Socrates, and no one, in our discussions for nearly a month, ever suggested that there was anything unreal or fictitious about the drama of the philosopher's life. They treated him as a man like themselves and they argued with him as readily as with one of their fellows. Never had Socrates proved so wonderful a teacher of men. "I think," an Army nurse said one day as we left the crowded classroom, "that Socrates is very *timely*."

There was something else very important that kept them following the Socratic argument. They saw all through it his attitude toward death. He had known the fear of it but kept a clear head to meet it and he saw beyond what most men assume to be the greatest evil and try to avoid at every cost. We cannot escape death in the end, so why not reckon with it now? What does it mean? That is the philosopher's

way of facing it—daring to look the last fact squarely in the face—to see if it really is what it appears to be. As Socrates put it, half humorously to the disciples gathered about him at the end, the true philosopher *studies only dying and death*. Our men were tremendously interested in this. They had already caught the spirit of Socrates but they, too, wanted the assurance which his disciples had sought from him. They had in most cases been in the presence of death without the maturity and steady wisdom of the seventy-year-old philosopher. When they read what he spoke of—that death might be a good and that man might in some form continue to have an existence beyond—they did not consider this at all irrelevant speculation.

The question is always as much one of believing in this life as in immortality. There is no separation between now and hereafter. When we live wrapped round with the many comforting assurances of civilization we take life here to be what is real and good, and naturally put the whole burden of proof upon anyone who dares to believe, in spite of all the present things that engross his mind and interests, in something beyond all these. It is up to him to prove whatever is to be believed about the life beyond, and solely from the facts of life here and now. But when there is a rift in the assurance about the present world, when war tears away the illusion of security and the solid earth of civilized existence seems no ground to stand upon from which one can reach out to anything else, we are thrown back upon the primitive question of all philosophy. What are we to believe simply about *human existence*? What rhyme or reason, what value, has it?

This question is what we find when we get down to the honest thoughts of the men who have waged and suffered war. They are more concerned about it than they are in making money or getting along in the world as men ordi-

narily measure success or happiness. Their own thoughts are identical with those of Socrates. But they are not used to his way of expressing the concern which they feel in themselves. When he said man must "care for the soul" more than for those other things—Soul? Was this what that word "soul" meant? Is it something as present and essential as *this* in the life of man? So they became interested in the discussion of soul.

Encouraged by their desire and readiness to discuss soul and death, we treated the question first in a large perspective of the life of man across the ages, before Socrates was ever asking his questions in ancient Greece, and indeed even before there was any historic record of what men did and thought. It seemed well to look at prehistoric man in his long struggle for survival and existence, and what beliefs he held and practiced during his far trek from primitive modes of life to civilization.

We were, by good fortune, remarkably well located to see visible and impressive evidence of what man had thought and done about death in early times. If we simply looked from the windows of our barracks and lecture rooms we could see along the whole eastern horizon a low-lying ridge of downland, called White Horse Hill, from an ancient landmark, a stylized white horse reminiscent of archaic religious symbols which had from time immemorial been carved out on the chalk subsurface of the hill. That long ridge was part of an extensive upland route of neolithic man, four thousand years ago, who first lived and traveled and traded along these ridge ways. Within easy reach of us was a relic of a tomb or long barrow called Wayland's Smithy, consisting of several huge stones still standing in position as side walls and top of a large chamber for a collective burial of the dead. There were, in fact, thousands of these barrows, all over the downs of Berkshire

and Wiltshire to the south, and the men of our post had chances to go by special service excursions to Stonehenge and Avebury which were the centers of those prehistoric human cultures and to see those remaining monuments of great stone.

These monuments are mute but very telling records. They tell a story that has counterparts all over Europe and the old world. The stone circles, too, were places of worship amidst these tombs. These most amazing megalithic works were constructed by the labor of men without anything remotely like the equipment we would use to set them up. These monuments are witness to a remarkable piety and some very strong beliefs about the dead and about the powers that ensure their continued existence.

We must see these interesting phenomena in their context—the picture of human existence in early times as it may be reconstructed by the help of anthropology. We have to guard against reading our own motives and beliefs, and I should add, our present incredulities, too, into the story of man. There is one complexity in civilization and another complexity in primitive culture. They are different and we cannot without great risk of missing the truth transfer from the one to the other. Nevertheless, we are continuous with the breed of mankind that lived in those times and we have evidently some of the same elemental concerns.

The earliest remains of the handiwork of man, such as the weapons and implements of stone, show him to have had a resourceful, enterprising character which enabled him to supply his first necessities and to march toward civilization. Peoples who failed in this may have lacked precisely such initiative. It does persist in those who have survived. We also find everywhere that man lived in social groups and we can infer with ample reason that the ca-

capacity for life in society has been indispensable all along. Where that fails, the people in whom it is deficient must perish from the earth.

But it is everywhere apparent that strive as hard as men could to live by their own ingenious enterprise and by co-operation in groups, they themselves never felt sure that they could survive. Their sense of inadequacy and insecurity is writ large in the record. Even as they banded together to do what was necessary for existence they celebrated certain communal ceremonies. Nothing seems to have been done without what we should call acts of "religion," such as prayer or invocation. They called upon powers other than those at hand. Those tombs and the stone circles that we observed on the downlands of England are some memorials of that religion.

The fundamental fact about man throughout the ages seems to be his sheer determined will to exist, to carry on, and to hold fast to whatever enables him to live. He seeks not merely to survive but to make visible and sure to himself that he does live on in some sense, even when the appearances such as death are to the contrary. There are symbolisms found in primitive culture that represent this and disclose how man grasps at something enduring and ever-living. For the fact of death is a shock to his natural belief in his own existence. The sudden change that comes over the one with whom he is living, the break in the fellowship—and, in the poet's words, "Oh, the difference to me!" It seems to have been the natural reaction to assume that somehow the dead still continue to exist. But since existence has no other meaning than life, the radical question is: Are they *living* still? How is it possible to exist and live beyond what we see? The answer is not first in words but in something else which expresses the meaning that words will later be used to communicate.

MAN KNOWS HIMSELF

The *action* of man in the emergency is itself the whole answer. It is the pious care taken about the dead, the acts of ceremonial and the ritual of burial, the putting with the bodies of articles of food, clothing, favorite weapons, and all the paraphernalia of their known life, as if they were really to continue to live in the same manner and style. Thus a life "hereafter" is believed in as a part of an unquenchable basic belief in life. Unless it is believed the entire foundation of present existence is threatened, namely, man's determination to carry on. Death forces man to affirm a faith, only implicit in pious practice and in such elaborate provisions of houses for the dead who continue to live, those pyramids, long barrows, and all that is in them. The laborious care that was spent upon them is a thing for us to reflect upon. When men spend their energies in doing such things they must be animated by powerful beliefs essential to their existence.

But a lurking problem forces man eventually to form a clearer notion of life than that which is only expressed in the doings at the burial. Death when it comes seems to be the very opposite of life, something negative, and that negative character attaints the life hereafter. For it appears not to be the same strong, even joyous, existence as among men on earth. It is a paler, shadowy thing, the joy out of it, somewhat at least; but anyhow it is less real and vital than what men know in their familiar social surroundings. Those who have passed on in death are believed to be with their celebrated ancestors, who are imagined to be greater men; but that very glorifying of those greater ones as giants of virtue often seems to betray both a sort of making amends for the sadness of losing those nearest and a certain inner uneasiness about the belief in the hereafter. The land of the dead really seems far off, the figures dimmer, somewhat spectral, apparitions, and the life some-

what negative. Man is not satisfied with that as an interpretation of life everlasting.

Thought, as Plato said, proceeds when we have two different appearances that may even seem opposed. We then have to see how they fit into one view or theory. In this case there is one notion of living beings quite familiar; the other is the notion of those who have passed a turn in life and been changed, and though they are regarded still as living, their change seems to be for the worse. This brings out an assumption about existence which man slowly realizes. Life is meant to be good or worth while. It should continue to be good and not change into something having less value, for it would then be less real than it is in the visible flesh and present fellowship. Thus, because the fact of death leaves its negative trace and effect in the imagination of the hereafter, it is not "overcome" or banished as a threat by the pious acts of burial. It is still deeply troubling, when all the ritual expression has been given, and it keeps man searching.

Incidentally, we can see here the dawn of thought that eventually becomes philosophy. There are two questions persistently haunting the mind of man. One is that about a being that does not dissolve into nothing or pass away but that remains the same in spite of obvious changes. The other is the question of the good, implicit in the demand that the life which continues after death shall not have less value to man than the familiar life. The more daring demand will come—why not *more* value even than this life? Eventually the philosopher will ask: What is true Being? What is the Good that is everlasting which nothing can tarnish in the course of life, nor death itself?

But it is a long, long way before such questions can be asked. In the primitive reckoning the situation may be described thus: man believes in his existence and cannot

readily accept the notion that life ends and that he himself ceases to exist. Death cannot mean that. It must be merely a passage to another form of life—still the same life, though different. It is that difference, of course, that bothers one because the afterexistence does not seem desirable, no matter how much ceremony is devoted to it, and so it does not seem so real. How can one conceive of something that remains the same and is not less real or less good than what one has in this life? This is the primitive problem.

Myths and many other forms of evidence from primitive culture show what was apparently man's first answer to the question. What happens when a man dies? How can he live if his body is there inanimate? But that very expression hits the nail on the head. The body *is* inanimate at death. Its "anima" or "soul" is gone. Gone where? To another scene of existence and life! The solution of the problem is that in man there is a soul which can do precisely this.

What on earth could suggest the notion of something leaving the body of man and going elsewhere to exist? Here we must reckon with another general feature in primitive experience, their preoccupation with dreams, which figure very largely in their lives. A man dreams, and in the dream he is wandering afield, doing many different things, some bearing likeness to things done in waking life but others quite phenomenal. He dreams of being with kin or with friends who have gone. He can be asleep at home and yet abroad in bright daytime. There are many old customs like not waking sleepers suddenly, lest they do not recover their roaming spirits. But the dreams have future significance—they tell of something to come. They were not treated as merely a kind of echo of what we should call real life. To people lacking our habit of putting things together and the discipline of scientific thinking, dreams

often mean more than daily perception. Life in the dream can be much more interesting, though it can also be more terrible than waking life. But in any case it has heightened *emotional* value and effect. The existence in the dream is real, vivid, full of portent.

Now such experience of dreams, it has been suggested, afforded an analogy for the interpretation of what happens at death.¹ In the dream we have a case of the inner being of man going out of the body and acting and suffering and enjoying elsewhere, existing significantly. In the case of death men *observe* a body quiescent as in sleep (and the poets have so often touched with their imagination that natural human comparison). But what really happens there is just the same as what they experience in dreams. There is a being that departs from the body but lives on in other scenes and actions. It is identified with that which obviously takes its departure at that juncture, the "breath." So the term "breath" was used by ancient peoples to identify the being that lives on, that lasts, survives, exists in spite of the death that befalls the body. Breath

1. See A. A. Bowman: *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* (posthumous, edited by Norman Kemp Smith, Macmillan & Company, London, 1938); Vol. I, Pt. II, *The Anthropological Picture of Religion*; chap. iii, "Animism and Totemism," and especially "Characteristics of Primitive Experience: Animism as a Primitive Theory to Account for Dreams," pp. 124 ff. and 140 ff. I am deeply indebted to the insight of my friend Archibald Allen Bowman for the views offered in this present treatment of religion. The reader is advised, however, to consult that great work for himself and not in this indirect interpretation in which his thought is modified by my own unprofessional reading and study of the data of anthropology over a period of many years when I was his colleague and close associate. More recently I have had the inestimable benefit of the thought of two other friends who have since died, Bronislaw Malinowski and Ernst Cassirer. See Malinowski, *The Foundations of Faith and Morals* (Oxford University Press, 1936), and Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1944), especially chap. vii, "Myth and Religion."

or soul is the *real* enduring being of man and it possesses the power to outlast all that happens to the body.

What man is trying to do here, in reckoning with death, is so difficult that he can only approach his own meaning by the help of analogies with what he understands in his own familiar experience. The basic notion is that of a being with power to stay existing while other things pass. It is not merely a thing or substance. It is characterized by its power to exist and to do things. Now in the lowly intelligence of primitive man this notion was tied up with a fact of observation, the breath leaving the body, and so the term for breath was used to designate the inner being that lasts. Such shadowy notions had to serve for that particular organization of human experience. The dream analogy traveled a long way in history. But other times, other customs, other analogies. As social life takes on other forms, civilized rather than primitive, and as the view of external nature develops in clarity and consistency with fact, the old imagery and theory will lose their validity, but then man must make another try, in accordance with what he then knows and experiences in his present existence. Since death is always a challenge to the value of human life, everyone has to make sense of life *and* death.

So we were ready for an appreciation of Socrates' study of the meaning of existence. That remark of his about studying death revealed to us the deeper object of concern underlying those discussions that had so often delighted and instructed his friends on many different occasions. Whenever anyone had happened to refer to justice, courage, goodness, or piety in any argument or in making some practical decision, Socrates was insistent on having these decisive values clearly understood. The same words were usually applied to a bewildering variety of different things,

even opposite ones. People seemed to do what they wanted in any case and never to be following any principle. Their lives were directed by their desires—and by their fears, too, and all sorts of notions, prejudiced opinions, that sweep through society. They spent their days in confusion. The tissue of their civilized existence was in fact a phantasmal unreality. That was what Socrates exposed, that ghostly unreality of the present. He aroused man's primitive fundamental desire for reality, for a life of substance and enduring value. This could be had only by prosecuting a search for the clear knowledge of those ultimate ideas of good.

Look what would follow from this knowledge, if we could but attain it. If men universally could grasp with their minds the essence of values, would they not make right decisions which each one could recognize to be right or just or good, and would they not then live in happy concord, instead of in conflict and war with each other? That consummation seemed, indeed, very far off but Socrates acted in the belief that even the effort to know those universal forms makes everyone, according to the strength of his mind, more truly brave, moderate, and wise. The only life worth living is one which is thus examined—examined to the bottom and at every moment. And no matter what happens to the philosopher who tries this, what he possesses, even though he goes to his death, is something everlastingly good.

All these things the friends of Socrates had heard him tell, and these truths had been the basis of their close common fellowship. At this moment they should not forget that immortality of the good by yielding to grief at his going from them. For something in him, and in them, could not die. And at this point the meaning that soul had for Socrates stood revealed.

As a young man, Socrates had been struck by the notion of Anaxagoras that mind steers a course through all things. It had seemed to him, however, that the first philosopher of Athens had never really developed the full significance of his own insight. The mind spoken of seemed exactly like one of the forces of nature. Maybe it is ultimately such a cosmic thing. But first of all it should be seen in its clearest manifestation in man. For there *is* such a power in man to seek forms of order and to use them in his personal life, in the creation of art, and in the organization of society. Whatever has order has reason in it—and reason, in turn, is mind. So it is thanks to mind, with its rational power, that man has any knowledge of truth and reality and guides his life by such knowledge. The obvious example was right at hand with Socrates facing a death from which he could have fled. While his bones and muscles and his desire to live and fear of the unknown prompted flight, yet *he* stayed. And why? Because he was held to duty by the absolute reality of justice, which his mind recognized; because he perceived, too, that even the citizens of Athens, though misguided, had pronounced his death from their belief in justice; because he knew they would both be judged afterward by the idea of justice which other people coming after them, and apart from the issue, would hold to and use. This everyone recognizes in some way or other—that there *is* justice. Surely the wisest thing is to hold firm to it and follow reason. By so doing Socrates might help all others to see clearly and to stand firm in their belief and not let prejudice and passion blindly rule them. Indeed the decisions of the man Socrates always carried the real weight of his argument. They were the things that proved that man has a soul.

Thus Socrates had defined the meaning of soul in his own conduct. He had staked his life on the imperishable

reality of justice or good. He believed that the mind which can know such reality and can also move man to act according to that knowledge is itself ultimate, an everlasting being itself. Socrates *identified* soul with mind. Here is one of the first clear and definite conceptions of the spiritual in man.

Now our time was too short with the men in the Army for any adequate consideration of the other great concept of the spiritual in our western tradition. Happily there was something from the Scriptures familiar to most of them, a passage often used in the burial service, those words of assurance which Paul, himself converted to the faith, had given to all cast down and troubled in the presence of death.

“But someone will ask, ‘how do the dead rise? What kind of body have they when they come?’ Foolish man! What you sow never comes to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that is to be; it is a mere grain of wheat, for example, or some other seed. God gives it a body as he pleases, gives each kind of seed a body of its own. Flesh is not all the same, there is human flesh, there is flesh of beasts, flesh of birds and flesh of fish. There are heavenly bodies and also earthly bodies, but the splendour of the heavenly is one thing and the splendour of the earthly is another; there is a splendour of the sun and a splendour of the moon and a splendour of the stars—for one star differs from another in splendour. So with the resurrection of the dead:

“What is sown is mortal,
what rises is immortal;
sown inglorious,
it rises in glory;
sown in weakness,

it rises in power;
sown an animate body,
it rises a spiritual body;
as there is an animate body,
so there is a spiritual body; . . .
Man the first is from the earth, material.
Man the second is from heaven.

As man the material is, so are the material;
As man the heavenly is, so are the heavenly;
Thus, as we have borne the likeness of material Man
so we are to bear the likeness of the heavenly Man.

"I tell you this, my brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the realm of God, nor can the perishing inherit the imperishable. Here is a secret truth for you: not all of us are to die, but all of us are to be changed—changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet call. The trumpet will sound, the dead will rise imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishing body must be invested with the imperishable, and this mortal body invested with immortality; and when this mortal body has been invested with immortality, then the saying of Scripture will be realized.

"Death is swallowed up in victory.

O Death, where is your victory?

O Death, where is your sting?

The victory is ours, thank God!"²

That is a defiance of the negative hand of death. It is a straight-out affirmation that the change is not to something less but, on the contrary, to what is infinitely more significant than existence in this life. The words have vastly more confidence in them, too, than that probability which Socra-

2. *The New Testament*, I Corinthians 15, verses 35–57, tr. James Moffatt (New York, Harper & Brothers; London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1935), pp. 220–221.

tes offered, though indeed his own decision on the strength of it must have argued more for its truth than the mere words can do for someone not present to witness his actions. Yet there is no mistaking the great difference in the character of the faiths of Paul and Socrates.

And a difference, too, in the meaning. Read this passage, as we did with the men of the Army, immediately after the *Phaedo*, and the contrast becomes apparent. One of the students in commenting on the text began by rejecting Paul, saying "there is a *failure* to define the separation of the soul and body. Why, this means man in this life is *only* a flesh and blood being, having *no* spiritual element . . . which does not agree with Socrates' idea of the soul as always being actively present in the body, not just coming into existence then [at death] or undergoing a tremendous change!" But while he wrote out this criticism, the very idea he was rejecting rebounded upon him with a force like that of a revelation—as when the persecuting Saul himself turned into Paul the Christian: "We have here a body invested [*at death*] with the imperishable. This seems to be a unique idea."

A unique idea, indeed—it is the beginning of an insight into the Christian religion. It centers in that tremendous change, the transformation of the whole being from an earthly to a spiritual body, and nothing done by man, for it is the act of God, the Divine Being. This divine action saves man and overcomes evil and death. It is not a question here of fostering a spiritual power in man that has been there all along only needing to be cultivated. The germ, indeed, of what man may become through God is there. But his mind, his powers of reason, his very insights into values are still all of a piece with his mortal body. The *whole man* falls short of what he is destined to be by God. The evil is all through him and his existence. Thus his

earthly life is necessarily fraught with conflict, war, evil-doing.

Man's self-knowledge must include, therefore, a repentant acknowledgment of this evil in himself. Sin means something radically wrong even with the mind, the central citadel of man's being. Even man at his best ethically, when he exerts his mind and lives according to his knowledge of justice and good, cannot merit the life everlasting. Whatever is of eternal value for man is due to the love of God.

To men who were wondering about the meaning of life in our present civilization this thought opened doors. They had noticed the hopeless, pessimistic view of the Greeks that there is an unending cycle of life and death, and a cycle, too, in history, a round of events where history repeats itself in large lines everlastingly, wars and rumors of wars.³ But this Christian message is that the existence of man and society and the whole world has a direction, and a consummation. There is a *destiny* of man, not simply a fate. It is not a progress in this world's affairs, as measured by human interests in power or well being, but it is, nevertheless, a life with an ultimate meaning, vouchsafed by the reality and power of God. In this aspect religion promises to impart value to the present life of man in civilization precisely because it refers beyond the human to the divine.

Instructed by the wisdom of philosophy or by the Gospel, man can know himself as a soul or as a spirit. There are some distinctive consequences of both these forms of self-knowledge. Certain things are required of us according to the teaching or the faith. Separately discovered in

3. The criticism of that Greek view of history is found, of course, in Augustine's *City of God*.

the history of western civilization, these ethical and religious convictions have run along together, and it is their continuing in union that is one of the great concerns of our time.

In conclusion permit me to explain what I am attempting to do here. It is, in the first place, simply to report the course of this very argument about religion and civilization in our discussions with the men overseas. We were trying to understand what certain terms like soul or spirit have signified and what makes men have recourse to them or to any others that will doubtless replace them in the course of time. We were not pretending to "prove" anything, not even the existence of soul or of ultimate realities or forms of order or of God. It would take much more extended argument to justify these beliefs with adequate reference to the scientific knowledge of our time. But, assuming that these beliefs are intelligible, we can show what they mean practically in relation to our own experience of life today. These moral consequences are of the greatest importance.

It may well be, though this cannot be argued within the limits of this present discussion, that we must have these beliefs in soul or spirit as a condition of our proving to ourselves the reality or value of anything else. They may be so fundamental to knowledge and to human values that they are beyond ordinary proof. But whether that be true or not, our immediate business is to follow out these ideas and see their working significance in human life today.

II

Responsibility to Man and God

*"Two voices are there; one is of the Sea,
One of the Mountains; each a mighty voice."*¹

FROM Greece comes the voice of reason: man is really a soul and he should seek wisdom for a civilized way of life. From the mountains: there is Almighty God, and man, who is his creation, ought to live righteously among men and according to the will of God. Man's answer to the voices, in either case, is responsibility.

"We are irresponsible because we have no understanding of principles." The GIs who ventured that analysis of their own experience in battle and in the subsequent occupation of enemy countries had been studying a great example in Socrates. It was by contrast they realized the nature of their own failing and the greatness of our need today.

The story told in Plato's work *Crito* is about Socrates refusing to escape from prison when all had been made ready for him by his wealthy friends, headed by the worthy citizen Crito. They had seemingly good arguments. One hears in them the voice of the average man of civilization. Socrates had a duty to his circle of friends since they had already committed themselves so far as to bribe the jailors—would he let them down now? He had a duty to his wife at home and his sons who needed him. He owed it to himself to complete his important mission generally, to be a teacher of men. Why throw away life because of a sentence

1. Wordsworth: "Sonnet, Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland." 1802.

by the court that was manifestly prejudiced and unjust? Why give his enemies the chance to gloat over their easy victory? Why be so different from other men? Was not Socrates a little singular, and proud of it, perhaps, and even somewhat egotistic in sticking to his guns so obstinately? Everybody expected him to get out of his trouble. To argue about it seemed much ado about nothing. It really did not matter.

But to Socrates it mattered tremendously. He was very much concerned, too, about his friends' views, and instead of making ready to go that night he engaged Crito in long, earnest conversation. In a time like that men ought to listen only to the voice of reason. They should scrutinize themselves to see what might be behind those tempting "reasons" that still did not ring true. So the day passed in a discussion of the responsibility of the citizen, and in reaching an understanding of the principle that should always govern the lives of men in any situation, even the most crucial one where life itself is at stake.

Socrates' resistance to temptation had almost a religious quality to it. His firmness was not simply pride or obstinacy—it was like the attitude of a man who has a responsibility to God. This was a decision he had to make and he could do no otherwise. It is true that he justified it by giving good reasons, better than anything Crito could advance. But behind all the arguments there seemed to be something like the necessity of obedience to a divine command, as if he were sent on a mission for which his life was needed.

This was hinted at by Plato with consummate dramatic art. The *Crito* was one of a series of portraits of Socrates in action at this time; another little dialogue, called *Euthyphro*, tells of an incident which stands in ironical contrast with it. Immediately before his own trial Socrates en-

countered at the very door of the court a young man, Euthyphro, who had a case of his own to prosecute. It appeared that he believed himself charged with a sacred responsibility and he was making two most serious charges against a respectable citizen—the charges of both murder and sacrilege, the latter being a deed violating divine law. Well he might need the assurance of a man with a mission, for it was his own father he was accusing of these crimes against man and God! Nothing seemed more contrary to common sense and honored custom. It is the normal duty of piety that a son should respect his parent and never presume to set himself up to judge of his damnation or sin. It should be left to others not bound by any affection and filial duty to take such grave matters to law. Surely Euthyphro must have some very deep wisdom about divine things and the responsibility of man to God if he felt called upon to act so contrary to human ethics! That set Socrates off on his usual inquiry of finding out what knowledge the man actually possessed of the matters where he was taking such fateful action.

The young man was acting from very mixed motives and notions. He was serious in his purpose but confused. His mind was a meeting of extremes that were not sorted out so that he could really understand what he was doing. Thus he had the primitive notion of a bloodguilt that attached itself to his family because of the murder and then the retributive notion that some member of the family must pay for it and rid them all of the sin—all a sort of family responsibility. But with this were some of the most advanced ideas of a philosophic age. One should never consider personal relationships in matters of right and wrong. The law of God as well as the law of man is no respecter of persons. One's kinship with the guilty party makes no difference to his solemn duty. A deed is always the same

no matter who does it. The question is simply one of abstract justice and doing what is pleasing in the eyes of the gods. And in this case the sacred duty of the son was to bring his father to trial in the court of the state not only for the murder but also for the charge of sacrilege.

It sounded well but something was being assumed—that the father of Euthyphro was actually guilty of the murder with which his son meant to charge him. The young man had already condemned his own father in his mind. He seemed to think that he was doing a great and laudable deed in being the first to take action in the state. The egotism of it all was apparent. Euthyphro was full of his own merits of piety. And there was something ominous perhaps in the case: the man had a plausible philosophy and even a persuasive enthusiasm, and this, joined with his own self-righteousness, was the making of a fanatic. If this sort of thing were publicly countenanced and became a general practice in the community, sons would be rising up against their fathers and hauling them into court for punishment by the court, and families would be disrupted and thus society's basic ties would be loosened beyond repair. Can it be a sacred duty to do anything that would thus destroy the family and with it the sense of loyal kinship on which civilization rests?

This strange kind of thing has happened in our own time. We remember the youth of other nations reporting on their parents to the authorities of the state as if it were a duty above the filial affections so natural to man. We remember that in history, too, there have been many occasions when good people from ostensibly high, religious motives have done the most absurd things, violated the plainest ethical duties of man to man, and even committed crimes in the name of a cause called sacred. The story of Socrates seeking to bring the young Euthyphro to his

senses and to the knowledge of his real duty symbolizes for us the slow, painful advance of mankind toward civilization and ethics. It is well worth a few minutes' attention to examine this case because it can point to essentials of a genuinely civilized way of life and enable us, perhaps, to see more clearly how religion properly comes in, not as a subverter of moral values but as depending on them and then giving them greater meaning and sanctity.

There was clearly nothing in that charge of murder. Two slaves had quarreled and the one belonging to Euthyphro had killed the other belonging to his father who, acting according to his lights, had put the murderer slave in a pit while sending a messenger to the oracle for instructions what to do in the matter; the messenger was delayed, the imprisoned slave died, and that was the murder! The father of Euthyphro, doubtless, had the right by ancient law to do as he had done, and certainly showed in his actions no disrespect of the gods, and he would never be condemned in a court. But even his guilt as a violator of a divine law seemed to be all in Euthyphro's imagination. Socrates conceived of the case going before an invisible bar of ideal divinities and being reasoned out there. Not before the popular gods of mythology, for their own conduct was no model for man, and they were pleased, apparently, with every sort of misdeed from the pettiest misdemeanors to lying, theft, murder, and crimes of mad violence. We cannot learn anything about right and wrong from mythology. This is a matter for reason as any case of justice among men is. The gods and men ought not to differ on such a point. Divine law must be the same as the law of justice which is universally right. Must we not conceive of the divinities as beings who love righteousness in man? Can we think that they would ever require of man actions that actually violate the ethical duties of man to man? A duty

regarded as sacred must be always a thing recognizably right in itself.

It is true that not all things that are right are felt to have the character of a sacred obligation but that only points the way to another question—what do we mean by the sacred? What do we find if we analyze ourselves? There is fear involved, but it is a particular sort of fear, which we call reverence. However, reverence is not solely an attitude toward the divinities, for it can also be felt toward men. Indeed a son should properly feel reverence for his father which the egoistic, self-righteous Euthyphro had not done. But then reverence contains another ingredient of feeling, love. The love of man to God and the love of man to man are both implied in the fact of reverence. Now we ought to go on to ask what it is that elicits from us such peculiar fear, love, reverence, and along with it, the distinctively religious sense of responsibility in men. What are men responding to when they take the religious attitude? If we could know this we should have some knowledge of the nature of divinity and then we should understand at last our responsibility to God.

Socrates was not telling, however, what Divinity meant to him. It was characteristic of him that he saw an immediate duty to man. He ought to aid Euthyphro to achieve his own enlightenment. And it seems that the young man was just at the point of finding the truth about himself which could eventually lead to the knowledge of the truth about the gods. Baffled and made desperate by all the questioning, he said: "If any man knows that his words and deeds in prayer and sacrifice are acceptable to the gods, *that* is what is holy; *that* preserves the common weal as it does private households from evil." ² That "if" tells what

2. Euthyphro, in *Trial and Death of Socrates*, p. 27; tr. F. J. Church (Macmillan & Co., London, 1908).

is happening in his mind because Euthyphro had been so sure before that he knew all about piety and duty. He went home and in due time maybe he would see the implications of his confession at the end. The sacred duty must be at least of the sort that keeps the family and all the human relationships within the community whole and sound. Other things may be required of man besides but that social justice is absolutely fundamental.

The men who were studying with us could not help being fascinated by Socrates at this moment. He seemed to have more to say, yet left us questioning. He struck us as being a truly religious man himself yet he pretended to no knowledge or piety. What did he really think was the nature of the divine? Clearly he rejected the popular notions of manlike deities or the philosophers' notions of cosmic forces of nature. He was always speaking, however, of divine forms of beauty and good—did he perhaps mean that these alone are the proper objects of religion? We could only wonder, because he said nothing more.

But having seen what Socrates made of the notions of a sacred mission and duty, we turned back again to the *Crito* to see what answer he would give to these remonstrances of his friend that he was seriously neglecting many duties, duties to friends, family, and even his own mission. He answered Crito with decision: there was only one duty in this situation and not a host of them to argue about. It was his duty as a citizen to obey the laws of the state. Nothing is higher than that or takes precedence over it.

In explaining himself, Socrates used the language of reverence. He spoke of himself as a *son* of Athens who though now being punished for a crime which he had certainly never intended, still owed to his parent, the state, his unswerving love, respect, and duty of obedience. A

very different idea of filial obligation from that in the Euthyphro story! He went on to say that his own flesh and blood parents had been joined in marriage under the laws of Athens, that they had given him life and educated him in the ways of the community, and that he himself had come to love Athens so much that he had never wanted to separate himself from the city, and he only did so on three occasions, when on service in the army. Life had been good to him. He had even been able, until the very trial itself, to indulge his love of wisdom, which is philosophy, and though some parties had on occasion threatened his life because of some uncompromising stand, he had already lived to a ripe old age. It was a good society in spite of the fact that he had been stinging it like a gadfly. He was as deeply committed to the state as if he had pledged and bound himself for life. At the trial it happened that a few men had misjudged him; and he believed that the small majority who had voted for his death were wrong. Nevertheless, these very men had not violated the Athenian law or any proper procedure in his trial. Why then should he be the very first to do so, and to tear down the authority of the state? That would only be paying back evil for all the benefits of his existence there. And even if the present wrong were considered to outweigh all that good of the past, it would still not be right for him to return evil for the evil done to him.

Socrates was duty bound to the state in spite of all that happened. His love of his country and regard for the laws remained unimpaired. There was no question here, we noted, of the laws themselves being condemned. All that had happened was that in their application by some men, another citizen, himself, had to suffer and even give his life.

Socrates was not saying "my country right or wrong"

and the men of the Army readily perceived the difference. They remembered that he had got into trouble in the first place because he believed in men forming their own opinions of what is right or good. He had refused to pledge himself to future silence if he were forgiven. He was in prison precisely because he had defended the freedom of man to inquire and find out for oneself. He was not the sort of person therefore to teach slavish obedience. But what he plainly taught on this occasion was the responsibility that goes with the freedom of man. If one enjoys a life in the state and is free, thanks to its laws, then he is bound to accept the decisions of its courts and to obey the law. A citizen has a personal obligation in this case.

What is so striking about Socrates here is that the whole affair was for him a deeply personal matter and not simply a legal one. He actually personified the Laws and imagined them speaking to him. Though laws are usually thought of as external commands, these laws had no such alien tone. They were pleading, as a concerned parent would plead with his son. They were nothing other than the inner voice of reason in his own mind. They asked him questions, as the mind always does, and he was obliged to answer straight and true, because they were his own questions.

Why does Crito want you to do this? What will you do? Suppose you follow what he is trying to persuade you to do—what will happen? And what is best to do for everyone concerned? In short, think it out, look at the whole of what you propose to do and see its consequences and meaning down to the very last detail. Our language has changed from questions to the form of that familiar injunction: Know Thyself.

Listen then to the inner argument as it might rehearse itself in any man's mind. "Do this for our sakes," Crito

had pleaded, "for me and your friends." Why? We want to keep you and, besides, we will be thought cowardly or ungenerous by our set who expect us to rescue you, our old friend, from the clutches of the law. It appeared then that Crito was not so entirely disinterested as it seemed. Besides, why should we be moved to do what is evidently wrong by a mere fear of the displeasure or opinion of others? Should we not dare to be branded either cowards or stingy with our money and resolutely do what is right? Is not this the true courage of a man? But Crito had urged other particular claims of more weight, such as the needs of his family, and especially the education of his children and then the opportunity and duty to carry on his teaching in foreign parts—new worlds to conquer. But consider what a life it would be for the family away from Athens! Besides, where could they go? Not to any other civilized community, for men have to live by laws, and any fellow sentenced to death who then broke jail would come trailing clouds of guilt behind him. People would never believe the first thing he had to say, for he had violated the solemn oath of every citizen. Besides, was he not devoted to Athens and all her ways of life? So why desert now? And again the question, where could they go? To some uncivilized wilderness like Thessaly, there simply to eat and keep his body alive while his soul perished for lack of doing what was necessary for a good life? As for his children, it is true they would not have an easy time in any case, but they must, like everyone else, make their own way in the world. Imagine them dragged off somewhere to be aliens in the land with the finger of scorn always pointed at them. They could never obtain a good education anywhere else except in Athens among his own friends and fellow citizens. And surely these friends would care for them. As for himself, was not this his final act as a teacher? By proving his faith

in the community and the laws was he not establishing more firmly than ever the reality of justice? Could he not hope that other men afterward would believe more strongly in the principle of law and right from seeing the proof of his fidelity?

No, the way offered by Crito meant a whole life of foreseeable evils. But the way that reason counseled meant something good for the whole community. For the whole community! Socrates believed in something there that scarcely existed for the other men. Thus Crito had thought only of the claims of particular persons, himself, the other friends, the wife and family of Socrates, and so on. It never occurred to him to concern himself about the society that contained them all and in which each one had his being. But Socrates had that whole vision of the community and its existence and good. Apart from it what would their several lives be worth? The state meant to him the ideal community, "worthier, more august, more sacred" than any single member of it. To it he had a responsibility nothing could set aside.

Truly a picture of a wonderful man, but what does it all mean to us? We are not philosophers like that; we do not have an upbringing like his that implants such sentiments of deep personal allegiance in us; we cannot act as he acted with such perfect faith and loyalty. Is it not just all a vision without relevance to our present conditions?

But that doubt is not what happened in the thinking of the men who were discussing this dramatic example of a citizen's responsibility to the state. They saw the principle underlying it. For there was a principle, a universal rule of action for man in every circumstance. The person does not have to be a Socrates and in exactly his circumstances. It is not a matter of how much or how little education a man might have. A principle is true for many different sets of

conditions. And Socrates had stated it plainly enough for everyone to see. "It is never right," he declared, "for any man deliberately to do harm or evil to another."

We could see at once that such a rule must obtain in every organized community. An intention to harm one's fellows in society is an essentially evil thing and everyone should exclude it from his life. It must be ruled out absolutely, because it is wholly destructive of the life of men in society. Consider any act of manifest intention to hurt another. Anyone who suffers from such action is going to answer back with resentment and a similar action. The result is a sort of private war between them with each one trying to outdo the other in the doing of what is injurious. Besides that, the parties to the conflict have friends or allies who will join in, and so the circle of antagonism widens with increasing animosity, fear, and suspicion. The spirit of retaliation tends to spread like an infection through the society and to become the prevailing rule of behavior. There is no stopping this sort of internal warfare within a state unless some national misfortune like war with other states comes upon it. An external war might temporarily unite the hostile forces and hold their enmities toward each other in abeyance but the old spirit remains, under cover of the necessity of acting together against the outside enemy, and the people concerned do not forget injuries once suffered at each other's hands and they fear more coming in the future, and so after the greater danger is past they resume their old hostilities without limit. You cannot have a society on such terms. What you actually have is a society in process of disintegration. The retaliatory principle is no principle at all but simply a vicious unreasoning habit which destroys all community life. Hence the rule of action Socrates pronounced is the only

right one: everyone must take care not to do what is harmful, injurious, and evil to any other person.

But how absurd this is when we have war at all! In such circumstances it is our duty to do harm to the enemy. Surely we cannot apply this principle to all situations without exception?

Here I will let one of the men in the Army answer, and what he said was told by others, each in his own way. For each individual must see the principle in its application every time, otherwise he does not realize the truth of it.

"Personally," this man wrote, "I like to think of it the way I did last winter during the war. The Nazis and their atrocious deeds are known the world over, yet there was many a prisoner who came in—perhaps an SS man—and was miserable from hunger and cold. We could have left him to stand all night in the open field, even subject him to certain 'softening up' measures for questioning. Yet I asked myself, even if this man has done what is wrong, does that mean that I should do so to him? No. I would thereby lower myself to the state of a Nazi. If we fight for just treatment and freedom for humanity, can I, once an enemy has laid down his weapons and surrendered, refuse him the things for which I am fighting? No. I would be defeating my own purpose. I would thereby show that I am no better than he; yet we say we are. But in contrast, if I gave him the can of C rations and allowed him to sleep in an old shed (where the prisoners are kept) would I thereby not be doing right? He might see that we do not treat the German prisoners as they would treat American GI's. He might see that there actually is something to the fact that America is fighting for that which is right and good, for by the way we treat our enemies we certainly show what and who we are. By repaying him with evil, as he might

have done, I couldn't gain a thing; yet by treating him as an American, the right way, I had everything to gain, nothing to lose."

Our men were looking ahead to the conditions of peace, not only within the nation but also among the nations. The principle of Socrates seemed good and essential in all possible aspects.

Thus it must hold, too, they argued in the life of peace in this "competitive world" of ours. How could one ever avoid there some harm to others? Almost every act must mean in practice someone's loss and disadvantage. It is possible, however, to conceive of co-operation that will yield mutual benefits for all. This idea is gaining ground but it calls for a lot of faith in all the others if one is to act on it. Good intention, too, is of no avail without good intelligence. One must understand how things work in our system of economy and what the effects of a policy are in all their ramifications throughout the web of life in the community.³ Not one person alone must understand but all the citizens. There is a vast knowledge of man and society needed in order to have this principle of Socrates' philosophy effective. But it is the principle on which civilization itself is founded. Unless ethics rules in the economic order where the real trouble exists we shall soon have no society at all. This is what our men believed.

But a formidable doubt lurked in their thinking. Its

3. Cf. the reasoning in the address by President Truman at Baylor University, Texas, when he said (as reported in the *New York Times*, March 7, 1947): "Economic conflict is not spectacular. But it is always serious. One nation may take action on behalf of its own producers, without notifying other nations, or consulting them, or even considering how they may be affected. . . . The producer [elsewhere] feels that he has been wronged, without warning and without reason. He appeals to his government for action. His government retaliates, and another round of tariff boosts, embargoes, quotas, and subsidies is under way. This is economic war. In such a war nobody wins."

source may be found in that expression quoted at the outset from one of the men: "I just don't know enough." Consider this principle: do no evil and return no evil to any man. How can we ever tell what is good or evil in any particular affair, how can we estimate the consequences of our deeds in the lives of everyone else, unless we first know what is absolutely good? Was not the wise Socrates himself always confessing to the very end that he himself only knew his own ignorance of such high matters? How, then, lacking perfect knowledge can anyone ever be sure of his duty?

The way a man reacts to this question reveals the quality of his soul. For it is like the temptation that Crito held out to Socrates: to escape from the hard law of life where he is because he wants to go elsewhere, to some remote place, where he will do a greater good. He must postpone the duty right at hand because he needs a greater wisdom of the perfect. He fears that in his ignorance of ultimate truth he cannot say anything is true or right now. Are these genuine intellectual and moral scruples or are they merely the thoughts of a man seeking a personal exemption? That was certainly not Socrates' way. In spite of his own ignorance he had made his moral decisions.

Indeed there is something wrong with that perfectionist philosophy. It twists what Socrates had said, for he had never said that man has no knowledge whatsoever of the good and the evil in life. There are things commonly recognized as evil, such as crime and other actions which the law takes cognizance of. In education, too, we learn the ways of life and action that are proper to the well-being of men in society. The creative arts, poetry, drama, and literature in all forms instruct us in the logic of events and what characters are most admired and what are dangerous in the course of life. Through many channels we know the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, the goods and ills

common to all mankind. We do not have to estimate everything for ourselves without the guidance of some general ideas that others share with us. In short we are not without some sound practical wisdom in these matters. This was what Aristotle had spoken of when he said that civilization is possible precisely because men actually have the same sentiments and ideas of justice and injustice and of good and evil. These are the first guides of life before there ever is any philosophy.

If we hold ourselves to the rule of Socrates, then, of doing no evil to anyone, according to the general standards of our society, we are on the only path to a better life than that which we now have. We have to learn about the ultimate good as we move toward it. Our loyalty to this principle on every occasion is the only way to advance to any superior intellectual knowledge of the good of man. But the hard truth is that we have to proceed without being absolutely sure of our own rectitude. It requires courage and a kind of faith to live thus, without security and feeling oneself always on trial and having to give an account of himself. But this is just what responsibility means.

Man is apparently following some gleam whenever he takes the risk of moral decision about right and wrong. He must have that same ideal vision of a community that Socrates conceived when deciding upon his duty to the state and the laws. Imagine a state of affairs where the rule of doing no evil to any other person was perfectly executed by everyone. Would not human existence be wholly transformed, life rid of its manifest evils, its wars, its conflicts, the passions and envies of men, and all the negative aspects? We have a picture there of the existence of men in a genuine and lasting concord, all avoiding evil purpose and its consequences, thinking always of each other and of the whole community to which they belong as fellow

members. But that state of things is none other than the perfect commonwealth or republic. It is the ideal of the society of men where justice is the rule of life. And justice is the principle that Socrates has been teaching all along, now seen in its positive form—not simply doing no evil to any other but doing only what is good for everyone concerned and for the whole community.

The fact that the meaning of justice is only now realized by us when we envisage the perfection of the order of human existence does not make justice itself purely ideal. It is a principle valid at every stage of life. It is the rule of considering the good of the community as a whole as paramount and regarding one's own interest as at all times identified with that of the whole. Every one of us is so made that he wants something particularly his own but we do not really own anything unless our claim bears inspection and is in accord with what is right for the whole scheme of things. Whatever measures up to such a requirement in the eyes of men is just. And it is by practice that one becomes perfected in the art of living thus. Men's vision of justice as a whole grows keener as they live more justly on the particular occasions when they have to act. They have to find anew what is the just and right thing to do at the time and place and in the circumstances in which they find themselves. The "form" of justice is there all the while. It is a constant rule and the universal condition of a civilized life. Though everything changes in the course of time justice is the principle of order in life which is forever good.

This was the principle our men had been seeking to understand. Often the words sounded too aristocratic in Plato. But we recalled how Socrates had spoken with special appreciation of the laborer or craftsman in Athens, saying that he knew a great many things very well and was an example of fidelity to his work. Taking our cue

from that tribute to the common man we interpreted the meaning of justice thus: Underlying and supporting the industry, the commerce, and all the good living that men can have in society is the contribution of all who feed and serve the whole people, in any way, who by their crafts, their knowledge, their labor, and their virtues make the life of the state possible. Every man must be thus faithful to his job, if anything is to be produced and enjoyed. That spirit of good workmanship and responsibility must get into the very bones of men and express itself in every action, and in all persons without exception. For justice is a democratic virtue, and it is absolutely essential to a civilization worth the name.

What it comes to in the end is that any man's duty in his station, job, office, or whatever part he may be playing in the business of life is no less exacting than that hard duty which Socrates discharged in his life. What more could one ask? Is not such justice enough?

But our men still wanted to hear that voice from the mountains. They needed no prompting. It came out even unexpectedly.

When all that I have recounted so far had been discussed, a man who had followed the argument with tremendous interest wrote a letter about an incident of his own experience:

"Things were going rough once; my ship was shot up; we were still being hammered by flak; my crew chief was severely injured; I had just seen a buddy's ship break into two pieces, and suddenly I asked God for help, or words to that effect. In a period of extreme stress I called to something from which my reason told me I could get no aid or even comfort."

In retrospect this man did not believe. What had thus occurred in terrible fear seemed not worth believing. He

suspected himself. Had he not merely "gone through the motions" without faith? Was it not simply habits of early training coming back upon him in a moment of utter helplessness like that of a child? His words were half questioning still. He was not satisfied with his own attempt at explanation.

Other things had happened under the very same conditions of stress which he would never think of tracing simply to childhood habituation. He knew of men for whose performance in the same awful period it was entirely appropriate to use the phrase of the citation, "for service above and beyond the call of duty." Allowing that this was sometimes abused, the more general complaint was that so many deserved just as much notice, so that to select any particular persons was invidious. The men thus recognized the distinctively moral quality in action. How could this ever be attributed to past habits of early training, for there was little or nothing of the sort in the prewar days, when men were not ordinarily called to render service at such extreme risks of life? So in this case something spiritual was credited. But anything going beyond this seemed incredible. All that had happened, in this particular incident, was that one man suddenly realized his own powerlessness in the face of death and made a pitiful appeal for help. That only tells something about man and his emotional reaction in a crisis. So it seemed. And yet both the moral and the "religious" acts had occurred when in great fear and trembling. Why should the meaning of one be discounted and the other accepted?

The question was certainly not settled for this man. He went on to write: "Man needs more than anything else in the world to get some universal standards of behavior . . . and we seem so constructed that only the fear of God will cause us to accept these standards." But this is an old

story about religion being needed as a sanction for ethics. The more important part of his communication is what follows: "I have a two year old daughter to whom it will be my responsibility to pass on, to a certain extent, moral codes; no, what I really mean is the basic notions of right action." There, the religious meaning had more personal validity—in the love and concern of the parent for his child. There was a connection somehow between religion and the moral principles of a good life.

But at this point the man was confessedly lost—he called it his "predicament": "The Christian orthodoxy is so concerned with ritual and formalities and so little concerned with teaching these basic values that we have no firm ground on which to stand—nothing on which to base our moral laws." This, too, is an old recurring complaint, that the business of the Church is so irrelevant to the actual moral needs of man. But today this is being said, not by old and wise men or prophets, but by these young men who have had experience that sends their thought, as they put it, "from the terrible to the divine."

The Danish philosopher Kierkegaard is well suited to speak to us today about this matter. He lived a hundred years ago in a kind of world and atmosphere of thought and ideals that still characterize our own time. He composed an unsparing *Attack upon "Christendom."* And the opening words of another work, *Fear and Trembling*, show its temper: "In the world of commerce, as in the world of ideas, our age is instituting a regular clearance sale," where faith can be purchased cheaply. "Now in olden times, as the Scriptures tell, faith was the task of a whole lifetime, because men assumed that proficiency in faith was not something to be acquired in a few weeks or days." ⁴

4. All quotations are taken from *Fear and Trembling* by Søren Kierkegaard, translated from the Danish by Robert Payne (Oxford University

I am now going to introduce through Kierkegaard a shocking contrast to the Greek view of life. It will seem retrogressive and even terrible. But I want to get before us a point of view which enables us to see a distinctive feature about religion which is lost when we have it too comfortably acclimatized to our other values of life. The example is the faith of Abraham—a man commanded by God, according to the story, to sacrifice as a burnt offering, his only son—and he proceeded to do it, he knew not why but from faith, and suddenly his faith was rewarded, for God presented the ram for sacrifice instead. A tale of archaic life, with blood sacrifice, a horrible primitive business, and the more shocking because a man's own son was to be slain. The very idea affronts all human ethics as well as affection. Is this what religion means? And are we to ponder over this when we have seen the showing up of the piety of the crack-brained Euthyphro, an enthusiast for religion whose folly was only that of charging his father with a dubious case of murder? Are we to try our patience further and examine an old Jewish legend about a father actually being willing to slay his own son for God's sake? ⁵

Press, London—New York—Toronto, 1939). This reference is to the beginning of the Preface.

5. At this point the present discussion ceases to report what was actually done in the discussions with the men in the Army overseas. It was not possible over there even to refer to the book in which this matter is treated—*Fear and Trembling*. Besides, it would have taken more time than was available really to study the ideas of Kierkegaard. In close juxtaposition with the Greek values of civilization they constitute a tremendous shock. They were intended by the author to be so. Religion was not regarded as ministering to comfort. Not that our men could not have stood the shock, for they were used to living without "comfort," spiritual as well as material, and they actually accepted a lot of unsettledness patiently, and with quite humble expectations that some insight would come to them. Kierkegaard is being widely read by the young men of today. Yet time is needed to make the point of view one's own. All that could be done in those discussions was to find our own way

But Kierkegaard knew his Socrates as well as we do. He had been deeply absorbed in his teaching and work.⁶ The Socratic way of self-examination seemed to him absolutely essential to all the stages of a man's life. If Kierkegaard urged the example of Abraham, then, in spite of Socrates' exposé of the spuriously sacred duty it was because he discerned something truly religious and significant in this case.

In fact the case had haunted Kierkegaard and he could not get it out of his mind. He tried various ways to make sense of it. Like Socrates he examined its personal meaning for all involved. What did Abraham believe; and Isaac; and what were the relations between the father and the son, and of both of them to God? And since the affair was not one of an instant, but took time, what was going on in all that time?

So Kierkegaard proposed a series of imaginary scenes, each one disclosing some aspect of the truth but no one of them adequate to the whole complex affair.

First the familiar text is given, and with a strange new emphasis on a word: "And God *tempted* Abraham." We have always thought the sacrifice of Isaac was a simple act of obedience to the Divine Will. Was it really a temptation, perhaps? Was Abraham, too, egoistic in this affair, as the young Greek was in his?

The story follows in its first version. Abraham and Isaac set out on a three days' journey to the mountains and then they climbed it alone and hand in hand. And Abraham thought to himself, "I cannot hide from Isaac where this path is leading him." Young Isaac, when told, simply with such reference to common experience as one could count upon to be familiar to the men.

6. See *Fear and Trembling*, pp. 177 f. In *Philosophical Fragments*, tr. David Swenson (Princeton University Press, 1936), Kierkegaard gives his own view of Socrates.

could not understand at all but only pleaded for mercy and the father saw a life ahead for him utterly lonely and without any joy. Yet he continued on his way, trying meanwhile to console and encourage his son. Then the tension suddenly broke *in himself*, and he acted violently and reviled himself. "He seized Isaac by the shoulders and threw him to the ground and said, 'Foolish youth. Do you believe that I am your father? I am an idol-worshipper. Do you believe it is God's command? No, it is my own pleasure.' Then Isaac trembled and cried out in terror, 'God in Heaven, have mercy on me! I have no father on earth. Be thou my Father.' And Abraham said softly to himself, 'Father in Heaven, I thank Thee. It is better that he should believe *me* inhuman than that he should lose his faith in Thee.' " 7

Then a second version—the action moving with greater dispatch and not a word between father and son. Abraham embraced Sara and she kissed Isaac farewell. They rode in silence. The father saw the mountain but kept looking down to earth. "Silently he arranged the wood and bound Isaac, silently he drew the knife; then he saw the ram which God had chosen. He sacrificed it and returned home. From that day Abraham grew old. *He could not forget that God had demanded this of him.* Isaac prospered as before, but Abraham's eyes were darkened and he knew no more joy." 8

A third version, with Abraham never even reaching the point of decision. "It was early morning, Abraham arose and kissed Sara, the young mother, and Sara kissed Isaac, her joy, her delight in all time." But Abraham rode away *alone*, deep in thought, and went up the mountain and drew the knife. He went out again *one evening, alone*, and "he prayed God to forgive him for having wanted to sac-

7. *Idem*, pp. 5-6. Italics mine.

8. *Idem*, p. 7. Italics mine.

rifice Isaac, to forgive him for having forgotten his fatherly duty toward his son. *Frequently* he rode his lonely way, but he did not find rest.”⁹ Here was why—he could not conceive that it was a sin to sacrifice to God his precious and only son, for whom he would gladly have given his own life many times over. Yet what if it *were* a sin to make this sacrifice, and besides, he really loved Isaac so, and how then could *that* be forgiven? It was a horrible dilemma, with the love of a son and the love of God placed in absolute opposition—an impossible choice, and Abraham did not make it and had no rest, even after he had prayed.

Then the last effort to imagine what actually happened. Father and son started out as before and “rode together in peace” and Abraham prepared for the deed “gently and quietly, but when he turned aside and drew the knife, *then Isaac saw* that his left hand was *clenched in despair* and that a *shudder* passed through his body”—but Abraham drew the knife all the same. Then the denouement, and they returned home where Sara hastened to meet them. “*But Isaac had lost his faith.*”¹⁰ And neither of the men ever spoke thereafter about what had happened.

In the light of these various views what was the meaning of the story? It was a trial of the faith of both Abraham and Isaac, old and young, and they never fared well at the same time. In Abraham it was a conflict between love of God and love of man, and simultaneously between a sacred duty to God and his duty to man. Sin was unavoidable yet he had to make a decision which would be the proof of his faith.

In the first scene Abraham was filled with compassion and affection for his son as he proceeded to do the will of God. He *feared* an egoistic temptation in himself, an in-

9. *Idem*, p. 8. Italics mine.

10. *Idem*, p. 10. Italics mine.

humanity, and even to Isaac he denounced himself as an *unbeliever*. Here Isaac in despair placed *his* faith in God in Heaven. And Abraham in thanking God for that, and being willing to lose his son who would no longer regard him as a proper father, was still believing in God Himself but at all that cost.

But when Abraham went about his business with calm, silent dispatch, not speaking to Isaac or expressing his personal concern, the affair came off simply with God substituting the ram. All very matter of fact and no religion anywhere. The duty was done but all love was out of it. Isaac had been untouched by what had happened and went on living and prospering as before. Abraham, broken in spirit, remained resentful and unforgiving and without any joy in life.

Then the interlude before action where Abraham alone suffers and prays and knows his own dilemma. It was the sin of being *willing* on his part and the opposite sin of *loving* his dearest son more than God. He had not the strength to go on with it and he prayed that God's will be done—but he could not *see* how.

The last view. The beginning, as in the first scene, with tenderness toward his son but also with quiet resolve, as in the second scene, and reaching the point of decision—*deciding yet flinching*, with revulsion and despair betraying themselves to young Isaac, who saw humanity expressed in those violent emotions and nevertheless rejected and who could not see any faith in God in that act of his father, and so Isaac came out himself with *no faith*. An absolute gulf separated him thereafter from his father. He was also separated from God. He simply could not understand. As for Abraham, he had proven his faith. "No one was so great as Abraham," wrote Kierkegaard after these meditations, "and who *is* capable of understanding him?"

Hardly youth, it would seem, from the example of Isaac. And Kierkegaard proceeded, in his further interpretation, to point to the events of that whole lifetime of experience which lay behind the decision of Abraham in that crisis.

With that interpretation we cannot concern ourselves further, much less with the actual nature of Abraham's belief in God. Our sole object here is to see, if possible, the distinctive character of religious faith as disclosed in this requirement of a sacrifice by Abraham. The story of Abraham is a vehicle of some meaning. But it must have a *contemporary* meaning and not be a mere antiquarian curiosity. Hence we have to select even from Kierkegaard's own selection in his account of it.

Abraham believed in the promise of the land to which he should go with his wife Sara. It was at the time most unreasonable in the eyes of everybody else to do so. He had to abandon so much on this enterprise, and he did not prosper. He was told that in his seed would be blessed all the nations of the earth; but no child was born to them and it became far too late. But he believed and it came to pass that Isaac was born. He "believed and therefore he remained young; he who always hopes for the best becomes old, deceived by life, and he who is always prepared for the worst grows old early, but he who believes preserves eternal youth."¹¹ And then this final crisis where all is to be taken away from him. We reconstructed what took place in those several versions of the story, but we quite forgot the very last words of the Scripture itself: "And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering.'"¹² This tells the faith of Abraham.

And Kierkegaard compares Abraham's crisis straightway with that of an "intellectual tragic hero," Socrates, at

11. *Idem*, p. 17.

12. *Idem*, p. 175.

the moment when he heard the sentence of death pronounced upon him: "One needs all one's spiritual strength in order to die." The "poet" Plato can make us understand that. But it is harder with Abraham. He was not giving his own life and only leaving his children to their fate, but was actually giving up the life of another for whom he would exchange his own many times over. That is the kind of renunciation called for by a religious faith.

The horror of it still remains. But it is not the function of religion to gloss over a terrible character of our human existence. We tend to do just that with our fine arts and philosophies and religions of this world. It seems shocking beyond belief that a man should sacrifice another's life for what he believes about God. But we only put the state in place of God and send forth our sons to die in war because of a belief in the cause or the nation. It is still the same phenomenon. Man sacrifices life for what he has faith in. The only question is what is the supreme object of his faith, the state or God?

A world of commerce relieves men of their fear and trembling about such important things. Men in such an environment cannot entertain the thought that the highest goods they have may need to be sacrificed in the end for a faith that gives life any value at all. Life seems more dreadful and mysterious when that sort of decision really comes home to men. And God takes on a very different meaning from the conventional object of reference in the usual sort of worship.

Different, too, in another respect is the way of Abraham and that of ordinary civilized men. They can face the losses of the day, in their world of business and prosperity, with confidence that in the future they can make them all good and actually gain more, and an unending progress of that sort of thing is contemplated. They do not relinquish their

pursuit of wealth, even after they come to know that it is not the ultimate thing they want of life. They keep strong and self-reliant and they date their success ahead without fear and trembling lest it may all become one day ashes on a pyre. The message of religion in this climate of opinion tends to be converted into the currency of commercial life. Heaven becomes but an extension of the projected day of reward, and of course there are losers, too, who receive their deserts. But there is no possibility of insight into the meaning of religion so long as this pattern of thought dominates men's minds. The Jewish people of old had a belief (which we feel superior to because we have the Greek notion of immortality) that their righteousness would be rewarded with prosperity *in this life*. Kierkegaard holds fast to that idea as revealing the true nature of a religious faith. One truly has faith who believes in this life, who sees the eternal to be *now*, and not pushed off into some vague future, and who feels that the divine word and law must be obeyed now, and not when it is safe to do so because one has gathered his family and his goods all about him and feels secure. The religious man is the one who, when the outward conditions make faith seem absurd and utterly without reason, still believes and acts. If all the evidence at hand is patently contrary, then it must be the wrong sort of thing we are taking as evidence—not the right kind of prosperity or righteousness. Such faith in God and insight into existence are what give to man a consciousness of having an eternal worth. But it is a faith dearly bought and no bargain sale affair.

The breaking in of religion upon the life of man in civilization must come paradoxically then, and with a shock to secular values. Still more, the sacred duty contradicts, in its first impact, even the ethical requirements of life.

Religion has to do with the personal relation of man and

God and what it requires of man. It endangers the personal relations of man and man, of father and child. It issues an imperative, a command to follow the way, apparently, of death. And though man, obedient to the will of God, may appear in that aspect as mere clay in the potter's hands, he demonstrates on his own account powers of individual decision and holds the line uncompromisingly in contrast with those people who prosper by always adapting themselves to men as they are. This is the courage of faith. With it goes the courage to renounce and to be resigned to everything that happens; and in this "infinite resignation" is the beginning of a transformation of the existence of man which is the act of God alone, who places the ram on the altar. So man returns to the life of this world as one who has already died and has known the passage through death to renewed life.

We can study the example of philosophy in Socrates and the example of religion in Abraham. It is hardly possible at times to separate the voice of philosophy from the voice of religion. Socrates, for instance, was strangely uncompromising for so rational a person. We may explain by reasoning how it is that man ought to live justly with his fellows, but what is hard to realize is precisely how a man acquires the attitude expressed in his injunction to care for the soul of man and to care for the community or state. That caring for others, how does it come about? That spirit of responsibility for one another—what creates it in any man? What enables man to be *moved* to act according to his insight and to *care* to be just? Beyond all the force of character or spirit we witnessed in Socrates' case we suspected at the outset something else that would alone explain his decisions. What can make the persons of others have such meaning for oneself unless, as Kierkegaard intimates, it is only by acknowledging through fear and trembling the presence and

supreme will of God in this life, whereby man really discovers the worth of persons? In such a "movement of the Spirit" the dilemma of man is overcome, for the time being.

From imaginative reading of the books about Socrates or Abraham or Job we can learn about their faith and make their experience contemporary for ourselves, but we cannot substitute it for our own. The ultimate trial of each individual is one which he has to stand alone in the crisis of his own time.

III

Our Hopes of Politics, Education, and Religion

IT is now time for us, with this argument behind us, to look at our own contemporary situation. I want to examine some of our idealizations today and what we hope for from politics, education, and religion.

Much is being said, in many different quarters, about "saving" the world. The term is too often used and abused. Yet it is no idle talk but very serious, inspired by an intense and, indeed, anxious purpose. When millions of people have seen their sons and even their daughters go into the service of the state in war and waited from afar to know how great or small their sacrifice would have to be, they were bound to put their faith in something and to do work for the future that would mean the saving of life and of whatever is of most worth in it. Otherwise such a time could never be endured. Each person then puts his trust in something or other. Some devote themselves to political action, and particularly the establishing of an international organization for peace among nations; others see the greatest hope in education or in philosophy; others in the religion of the church. What is the promise of each of these—what can we expect from them?

POLITICS

Politics first, for it is the quickest way of action on large issues. "It is for us to accept or to reject, if we dare, this doctrine of salvation. It springs from stark necessity and that is inexorable." ¹ In these words the decision has been

1. Bernard Baruch, Dec. 5, 1946.

put to us and to the nations of the world that we shall take the only step possible for the survival of civilized man on this earth by adopting a plan for the government of all operations with atomic power. This recourse to government is no mere expedient hurriedly thought up because people have only now realized what individuals, groups, and states can and will do with any great new accession of power. The history of the civilization of the western world is a repeated illustration of the effective use of political institutions to introduce restraint, direction, and beneficial law into the relations of men. The kinds of government have varied immensely. And very few governments have been founded upon a deliberate agreement and free consent as we would like to do today. But we believe in this and so we use such language as "salvation." We are convinced that the matter is urgent—take this step or there will only be lasting crises, not peace, and certainly war in the end. We will drift along helplessly in continual competition for advantage in the race for superior atomic or other power over others. Unless we make this political decision in good faith, then, the decision will be taken entirely out of our hands.

Politics does mean life or death. That was the way the immortally honest Thomas Hobbes put the matter. In the midst of a civil and religious war he depicted the inevitable fatality for all if there were no genuine authority empowered to lay down the law for their mutual self-preservation. Men exist always in dire insecurity unless they gain the assurance of survival through the state, the "mortal God," he called it. He could not honestly call it more, for no society of men is everlasting and it must eventually perish as men do, and there is nothing more for them after that. Only another brood succeeds, perhaps, and so life is perpetuated, with no care for individuals or

communities. In *this* life, which is all there is, man and the state survive together, and if man sees this truth clearly, that he *has* nothing else to rely upon for his salvation, he will put all he has into the state, withholding nothing for himself, not even his purely personal rights or liberty. The absorption of man in the state must be total.

But that would never do. The fear that makes us willing in the first place to be governed soon makes us fear the government in turn. John Locke spoke out for a better system and Jean Jacques Rousseau sounded the keynote of its philosophy: "We must think less about authority and more about liberty."

The notion of liberty, solely by itself, tempts men to claim anything and everything for themselves regardless of others or of any justice. The logic that Socrates long ago pointed out can be seen again in this case. Whenever liberty is sought by some in so reckless a manner, the others who suffer therefrom take what they can get for themselves, and so all come to be headed for an abyss of terror where everyone is desperately attempting to get a secure advantage over others and believes it right so to do and the very law of life. In such circumstances life has very little value and liberty likewise.

More is needed, then, than the idea of liberty. It must be remembered that we are concerned with the life of man in society. The system must be one that looks to all men and the liberty of all. It must be governed by the Socratic law of justice: no action is ever right if the intention is to put others at a disadvantage in vital matters, that is, in the things that the community as a whole values. Whatever liberty any one person claims for himself must square with that rule of equality. It must be the same for all—no privilege for some, disability for others. Now in a thriving society there are generally recognized liberties of action

which all are entitled to—these are what we call “human rights.” Here are the principles of democracy—the law of justice for all and equal liberty and rights.

This has been the sort of idealization with which we of our nation and some others have gone out to deal with the harsh demands of inescapable fact. Men must always take some measures to protect themselves against the violence and the merciless self-interest of each other, and government is the universal answer to this need for security. The problem for us is how to give the government the needed authority for this purpose without sacrificing these essential values of democracy which we think of all together under the rubric of freedom.

Democracy is a great conception of human life. It offers hope to mankind of things they can all share instead of the everlasting jealousies of fear. But the very greatness of the hope is a danger. Men may live in the realm of the ideal and put aside to another day what they must do for freedom’s sake in this day. We may act as if we had already attained freedom in our society and the essentials of justice and equality. Such fond complacency, together with a forgetting of the basic fear and insecurity of life, tends to make us think all is right with ourselves and our world. And even if we have to fight a world war or two, we may still think *our* democracy is right and only needs to be expanded into a world system for us all to have the peace we want.

But freedom is an ethical idea. This means that no actual society and political system are ever good enough to be taken as the perfect example. Though we ourselves may not see that, because we are well off, those who are not so circumstanced have a keen perception of the faults and they will demand justice or equality in the name of freedom, and in areas of human life, too, which we have not

thought of as requiring the application of our principles. Because the proposed applications of democracy do not agree with our evaluations they are likely to be called "undemocratic." And so we get into an argument about our respective virtues. This takes place within democratic societies and even in the diplomacy between great nations. And at any moment the seam in the fabric of human existence in society may open.

There are blind sides to every view. Consider the picture we had of men engaged, every one of them, in a dire competition seeking advantage for himself and not caring about the other fellow. In certain respects we have been able to correct this situation by the device of government. The civil and political rights of men may be protected. But how much a man can actually enjoy of the opportunities represented in these rights has in fact come to depend upon his status in the economic order. And this "order" is not conceived itself to be governed by the general principle of justice that is enshrined in the idea of democracy. What we have actually had in the history of our economic "order" is precisely the sort of reckless disregard of life and liberty which originally called forth the democratic demand for a free society. But those who fare well in the present system resent this judgment of it by the ideal of democracy. They cry something about "sacred" rights that will be violated—rights the people never heard of, or witnessed respected, until this moment. The name of freedom is far too often profaned today. Free enterprise is sanctified as on the same level with freedom of thought or freedom to worship or freedom to unite to present grievances and convince the world of the justice of one's cause. The public freedom of the press is identified with the merely private interests of ownership of the press which is simply a commercial business. Thus sanctity is often

invoked to avoid the examination of the justice of the case and whether the freedom and welfare of all are being considered. If men today are turning away in despair from political democracy, it is because they see it only as political and not as applying to the economic realities of life. The democratic principle requires us, however, to face these facts, too, with our ideal and to do in that sphere what it requires.

There is a second form of ethical blindness of which we must be cured—one on which the thoughtful men of our Army have already been enlightened. Democracy means the personal responsibility of every citizen. This is a consequence of the idea of freedom. If man is to be trusted to govern his own life as a free agent he must make himself responsible for everything he does that affects others. Society and its values are in every man's keeping. That must be the attitude of a free man. Now there is another way of expressing this social concern and the loyalty to principle. While the term "responsibility" emphasizes the individual's own will and freedom, the term "obligation" shows the other face of the same ethical coin—*obligation*, for that brings in the idea of the ties between men, the bonds, and what binds them together in a life of community. Obligation is absolutely essential to society. No law, no system of any sort, political or economic, can endure if there is not obligation holding for every member of the society.

When the democratic conception of politics was enunciated by Rousseau he himself pointed out that freedom must be united in idea with obligation. And in his own thinking he forecast the turn of thought that has come over us today when he abandoned the theory of politics, as having reached a limit of its saving power, and then devoted himself with enthusiasm to the problem of man's education. We say nowadays that we must ultimately

depend on education in order to have democracy. Some are emphatic in demanding that this be explicitly a moral education. But in any event "education's the thing," we say, and thus we betray the fact that we do *not* hope for everything from political government but have this other idealization—something else in which we place our trust.

EDUCATION

The turn of thought is a proper one but is not always wisely directed. Some think we can hustle things up with "a moral education of the masses," as if we were engaged in something amenable to mass production. Others insist upon the continuing value of the arts and sciences, the humanities of liberal education, and their thinking is closely tied up with the traditional scheme of education in college and university. Still others see more broadly, that it is a matter of "a general education for a free society." One should go one step further and envisage education not in terms of numbers of people nor of their schooling but rather of the secular world-wide influences of the modern epoch that bear on the minds and nature of man. For it is a question of ethos, or the whole character of our life, in the modern world.

A change of tradition has occurred in modern times from many causes too numerous even to be summarized. Men used to think of the state and themselves alike as standing under a divine dispensation so that they felt the presence of a higher judge and they themselves judged the acts of their rulers and their laws with virile fearlessness. They had a conception of the law of God to sustain them in fighting unrighteous law and government. This was once part of the strength of our western civilization. With it went a belief in the spiritual in man or the soul.

And in the congenial tradition of Greek idealism the soul was associated with realities beyond the particular things of our familiar experience—the universals or ideal forms. Within that older framework of belief and attitude men could regard the state highly but not too highly; grant it sovereignty but not above natural and moral law; sacrifice for it but not for the state alone but rather for what it represented, for the measure of justice it was dedicated to bring into the lives of all men. Beyond the state was the Divine—and the state itself was certainly not divine.

Such transcendent reference, however, has quite vanished from our life today. The whole tenor of existence in our sort of world has been contrary to that older habit of mind and feeling. But when the sovereignty of God goes, men confront only the sovereignty of the state as the supreme power, the only measure of right, and the only thing worth sacrificing for. Or else, if they disbelieve that, they tend to believe only in themselves, their own opinion and their own power. In such a mood they are uneasy about any allegiance to principle—and when uncertain about that, men become uncertain about each other and do not trust one another. But this is only to say that they do not have any *obligations* to each other or to the community. Everything is subject to question—not only beliefs but substantial human relationships. Maybe this accounts for what we miss in society today, the need, which our men in the Army so clearly recognized, for personal responsibility and obligation.

Some will urge that we ought to revive as resolutely as we can the religion and philosophy of the tradition, Greek and Christian. I do not here propose that; only that we should not forget them. The tradition gives us perspective, not a ready-made solution. We cannot refurbish old beliefs any more than old arms. Besides, a doubt may assail us

here. Was not the older humanistic education itself part and parcel of the whole system of things in which modern political institutions developed and may it, too, not be just as faulty as they are? A common defect may exist in both our education and our politics. But whether faulty or not, the things that have brought us to our present condition are forces, interests, preoccupations, habits, all associated with immense developments in science, industry, commerce, the expansion of nations, the ready communication of views, ideas, passions, policies—in sum, a vast *secular* movement that affects everybody. We can move in it but not jump out of it. Perhaps that is too extreme a caution. Maybe we can make such a leap, as they sometimes call it, a leap of faith!

But first of all we must certainly know ourselves better. For there is already a distinctively modern tradition in which we all grow up. It is empirical in attitude and belief. It is associated especially with the development of the natural sciences. Thus the modern mind cares not for universals, fixed, timeless truths, even permanences. It is progressive in sentiment and rejoices in leaving many old things behind. Some are well past, and oblivion is what they deserve. The present work of science and philosophy is to determine the truth for our life and time. We may see here the distinctively scientific contribution to the general education of our world. The appreciation of it in circles of higher education was too long coming. A battle had to be fought for recognition and the inclusion of science among the older humanities. Battle scars remain still, but the worst drawback of that unnecessary struggle between the arts and the sciences has been the preoccupation with it on the part of men of intelligence and high purpose so that they were unaware of quite another development that stole over us, in the mentality of nations of the world; and

it is this development in our education that we encounter today and for which we need not only united nations but united intellectual and spiritual action.

Mankind everywhere is actually in the thrall of a baneful tradition which we have not chosen or reasoned to in the least. It is hard to name, but I shall call it the *nationalistic* tradition. Of course boundaries and jurisdictions have always separated peoples, but nothing like the way national sentiments, prejudices, interests, and deliberate indoctrination have done in our time. A great secular process is on, in the east and the west, and north and south, in the regions of every continent and even within every nation. It constitutes a progressive alienation of man from man. In the face of mounting national antagonisms, the value of security becomes dominant, the goal of all effort, and everything tends to be sacrificed to it, including freedom and even truth. Self-preservation becomes more important than a good life *worth* preserving. Reliance is then placed upon power, political and economic power. Little faith exists in the prospect of agreement and in the possibility of justice. Public men feel obliged to apologize for seeming to propose generosity or to follow any moral principle; everything must be presented as national self-interest. Justice is not believed to have any universal validity, though her figure may be stamped monotonously on the coins of the realm, national and international. A nationalistic pattern has a firm grip on the minds and habits of feeling of men—even of those who outwardly fight its evils. It is in fact *determining* our whole mode of life and making us into an image of something we cannot remotely call human.

This phenomenon seems to be more than one of education. It is as if with the passing of belief in any ultimate or transcendent realities, another sort of *faith* has moved

into the vacuum and constituted itself the actual, practicing religion of contemporary man. It is absorbing all man's capacity for duty and loyalty and this is man's captivity today. To change a phrase of Rousseau's—man *believes* himself free but everywhere he is in chains.

What, then, are we to do? We must begin where we are still in a position to direct our own destinies—in free education. We are not yet blind slaves. We are still able to see the values of human life that we ought to regain or foster in this set of circumstances. Our education should set a value on all that is human in every part of the globe, and look to what is common among men, and work toward universality, and hope for and cultivate an increasing community of sentiment, interest, belief, and especially a belief in the worth of the human person.

We have the same great forms of human culture to draw upon that have always made civilization worth while to men. Let us consider these and in their modern order of prominence.

We have great science. At present its constructive power is being largely turned to private profit or national advantage, and as thus used, it is often employed against the interests of humanity. But science is not so selfishly intended by those who pursue it. There is no partiality nor nationality in its make-up. And a great universal boon is available to all who can rightly understand the nature of science—understand, I mean, so that it becomes their own personal possession as a way of thinking. For science is the working of reason. It discloses a power of man over nature through rational thought. A real faith in science may bring men to see that they might achieve a success close at home if they would only apply the scientific, objective method to themselves, in all their human relations, in politics, economics, and society. Reason is cer-

tainly one of the foundations of civilization. It rules out absolutely such blind prejudice, willfulness, inhumanity of the sort we observe in our world.

Yet reason through science might never gain a first foothold in minds already thoroughly distorted by passion, prejudice, and nationalistic obsessions. It might be possible, however, to catch the imagination and touch the feelings. Literature and the arts do this, and they afford enjoyment that takes man out of himself. Indeed, the arts must certainly be effective, else they would not have been taken in tow by politics, as propaganda, and made to serve vicious nationalistic purposes. But then we must realize a further problem. What hope is there from the arts when these forces are already gathered to the enemy of mankind?

The answer is that human genius and the delight of men in it are things too spontaneous, abundant, and great to be really captured and used as slaves. Controlled art becomes dull from lack of fertility. Art is invention, experiment, even a kind of magic. Men have always played with it. Now to play freely and to act according to orders are two totally different things. Besides, men are pleased by novelties and strange new inventions. From prehistoric times on they have been known to be tempted to roam out of their customary bailiwicks into other lands with other "cultures" which they make their own and, indeed, they are themselves often made what they are by that very stimulating experience of new contact. Civilization has grown out of such events.

Is the germ and impulse of adventure now all gone from the nature of man? Tasting forbidden fruit of foreign arts and letters has happened even under authoritarian regimes. It will occur again and again, because men cannot long stand authority that ties their tongues and closes

their ears to everything except propaganda. Surely it is on the native aesthetic interest, curiosity, and enjoyment of the people that one can build some hopes for our escape from captivity today. Once the nations of different lands become familiar with and enjoy the aesthetic treasures of each other's cultures, they may come to take them as "their own" and forget that they have been foreign, "made in—." It is not only the arts and literatures of modern peoples, east and west and north and south, but also the ancient world of the mind and spirit of western civilization that are alien to the men of our present world. To discover and rediscover these things of beauty and wisdom and the various forms of good life may be a way to emancipation. The native interest exists; the more adequate opportunity for its cultivation and expression ought to be provided. Then it might happen that, thanks to the work of the arts, men will be caught off their political guards and begin to think of humanity universally. In that event they would be on their way forward toward a state of affairs where a man is proud to say that nothing human is ever alien to him.

Philosophy is in the van of such an advance for it looks to the universal. It disregards all peculiarities of people as it disregarded the snub nose of Socrates. It seeks truths universally valid. It is not baffled by those oppositions of view that make men despair and take to arms. That sort of thing is only a challenge to mind. The task is immense: to find *unity* in the difference, to be courageous where others see only insoluble and irreconcilable contradiction, to win a vision of the whole world and of the right relations of all its parts, so that the abundant diversity actually enriches the life of all. In this respect philosophy is the proper school for statesmanship. It is a discipline in that wise art of creating union where parties seem hopelessly locked in perpetual conflict, of taking opposing claims and

transforming them into "rights" that all can accept, of discovering policies that can carry along temporary losers as well as winners, because all will have gained confidence in their common existence together and see prospects of greater personal good ahead. This, after all, is what justice means in practical life. Those who know the discipline of philosophy can well appreciate justice and what is still more important, the patient, courageous, disinterested way it must be sought for in actual affairs.

But in the situation today can philosophy any more than science and the arts get past the guards on the frontiers of mind? Is it not only too apparent in all the rage of "ideologies" that philosophy is as much as anything else a captive to the nationalistic mentality? So used, it simply rationalizes political purposes instead of exercising a rational *judgment* of those purposes. Its easy solutions in pretentious generalities have as little value as the promises of party platforms. We think it an exception to the rule when we ourselves plan *education for democracy*. But is it not our intention, when we so plan, to strengthen our democracy in an embattled world where our social system is arrayed against another particular system? We in our society are embroiled in particular issues with other societies and cannot set our sights on man in a universal order. Philosophy and education are alike in the grip of the false gods of nationalism.

This indicates a limit to our human resources. Our hopes of education are dimmed by a suspicion of failure. The best efforts of the sciences, the arts, and philosophy, as things are at present, can hardly suffice to free men everywhere from their nationalistic twist of mind. This is not readily corrected by either intellect or imagination, for it is rooted in a deep-going conviction. And this opposes an iron curtain which keeps the mind shut against the

ideas that might come from genuinely disinterested, spontaneous enjoyment and learning. There is too solid a faith here. Such a power can only be assailed from the depths of the soul. What hope have we of that?

RELIGION

Now there is in fact a considerable record of evidence in the history of humanity that shows an inner agency which is at times of genuinely catastrophic power. Men have experienced a profound *self-judgment* within themselves that turns them completely about and sets them on another radically different course of life. It accompanies a conviction of their own human insufficiency, even if they were to command all the powers of earth. The experience is both a spiritual and a social one. It is so tremendous, when it occurs, that it tends to be regarded as witness to the judgment of God. No mind can shut out this kind of judgment which no man speaks and with which one cannot argue. The voice from the mountains speaks a stark truth about evil in man himself and in all his life, in the institutions of the state, in education, in everything. Such a self-conviction makes man doubt, and doubt especially the greatest power he ever wields, the power of the state.

Epoch-making doubtings like this have happened time and again. The record is preserved in the religious scriptures, in stories to prepare men to understand what happens, when it comes. A man may be the servant of the state like Saul of Tarsus who suddenly knows the truth that the whole man in him must be transformed, that he must die daily and be born anew, and that he must go out and bring others to this same self-conviction and belief in God. Were this sort of thing to happen in our time it might be the very first puncturing of the closed belief, the first success-

ful assault and breaking the spell of the nationalistic religion of today. Once a breach is made, through such inward conviction, then at last philosophy, the arts, and the sciences can enter bringing their civilizing powers as they, too, have done before.

When religion comes to dispel the idolatry which is the bane of our existence our hopes can be greater about everything. Men in society are now afraid of each other, and whole nations are afraid, and so they are radically distrustful and unable to believe in each other. All of us alike, from continually practicing a double morality of public profession of good faith in each other and all the while action on the side really belying it, must eventually cease to believe in the integrity even of ourselves. It may be that the fear of God that ushers in a conversion of the spirit of man can subdue all those lesser fears. The willingness to risk and give all and follow Him enables men to brave any dangers involved in doing the right thing. In this mood they have the courage and the will to be just. They will feel obliged to do their part toward each other and toward the community, that is, wherever there are men like themselves, all equally creatures of God. They have thus a living sense of responsibility to others. And moral obligation is at last a real thing, binding them to each other and to the principles that must govern in the affairs of mankind. These are what seem possible when the religious spirit reanimates men. They are possible, ultimately, for this simple reason, that when man has such faith in God he gains a personal faith in his fellow man. Go and do likewise is the typical imperative of divine love. It is absolutely different from any command that is expressed in the law of the state or by any authority. It is a resounding commandment from a mighty voice and it can be heard

in all the far corners of the earth and no curtain can shut it out.

We need today a finer art of practical politics than ever before. We cannot wait until we have made over the agencies of education into what they should be. They would be locally restricted for a long time in any case to those regions which have been imbued with our own humanistic western tradition. It will be long, too, before constructively working communications can be established between the continents that have their own slowly developed traditions and cultures. For a long time nations, even if organized as united nations with a political instrumentality to serve them, will remain uneasily and even belligerently conscious of their differences. The threat of a possible world conflict cannot be removed by any devices of politics. We cannot assure others at the very outset of our own good intentions, partly because the barriers of language, frontier, authority, and historic culture block our efforts. But that is the least of the impediments. We are inwardly uneasy and not of good conscience and protest our innocence too much. We know there is radical evil in ourselves but pretend there is not—or else we put off the reckoning, with the politic thought that of course the dangerous emergencies must be dealt with first and then we can take up the thing nearer home. Meanwhile the nations are made more than ever aware of their mutual faults, through propagandist communications on the one hand and, on the other, the acts of diplomacy and commercial or financial dealings which are relationships the farthest removed from anything we would call personal relations, the kind that can evoke obligation and good faith. Foreign affairs have to be the chief concern of contemporary politics—that is, affairs with those foreign to us, and the very term emphasizes that

we remain alien to each other. In the diplomacy required in these days the negotiators must at every move vindicate themselves at home so that the nation seems always right and whatever is opposed to their policy always wrong. In this situation the judgment of the public determines the strength or weakness and the measure of true principle the government may follow. The vast public, then, needs practical wisdom and responsibility.

Where will that wisdom and responsibility come from if not from a religious attitude, which is at the center of the spirit of man? This produces an unswerving faith in right, and yet the patience to wait, and not to be misled by rumors of wars or by short, quick solutions of political formula or philosophy. The way to salvation, the religious message is, is through long suffering and the faith to take it.

Voices have spoken recently with the authentic note of religion.

"The Christian faith has always taken a more sober view of the realities of man's common life than contemporary philosophies. The prophets insisted that a leopard does not easily change his spots and that it would be as hard for nations 'accustomed to do evil' to 'learn to do good.' From the standpoint of the Christian faith there has never been any reason to hope that the nations of the world could be brought, either easily or immediately, to accept the kind of responsibilities which modern nations must accept if we are to have a stable world community of nations.

"If we understand the realities of our day in the light of our faith, they must prompt us to repentance rather than despair. . . . St. Paul conceived the Christian church as a kind of perpetual 'saving remnant' which should be able, by faith, to discern both the justice and the

mercy of God in the events of history, and thus bring forth the fruits of repentance. If the church is to be truly the 'saving remnant' in our time, it must mediate the divine judgment and mercy to our hearts and consciences, so that, no matter what happens, we shall know that our individual and our common life stand under God's sovereignty, and shall discern new opportunities and new responsibilities for doing God's will in every crisis which disturbs old securities and disrupts traditional modes of life.

"Such a faith will induce a kind of sober serenity which saves men from bitterness, despair and bewilderment. It knows that 'neither life nor death—nor things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' This sober serenity, prompted by faith, is not the same as the social peace among men and nations. But it may well contribute to that peace by dissuading us from all forms of hysteria and frantic efforts to 'save' our civilization. Civilizations, like life itself, are best saved, if we are not too anxious to save them. For self-interest always becomes mixed with such anxiety and we may aggravate the perils of a civilization by trying to save, not civilization, but our peculiar conception of it." ²

Those who believe in the value of religion may conclude now that the churches are the whole hope of man. Let them, therefore, throw open the doors and bid all men come in and find salvation. Now while the men in the Army have been willing to give the traditional institutions the benefit of the doubt, there is still their doubt. They may come, however, putting their hopes ahead of their questionings, for they want religion. Many have crossed the threshold

2. "Towards a Christian Approach to International Issues." Editorial in *Christianity and Crisis*, VI, No. 21 (Dec. 9, 1946), 1 and 2.

before, and they may continue, bound by an obligation, perhaps, which they have learned their own way. But many will stay near the door and then go out again after a few visits never to return. They do not yet have the patience given to the saints. They may find nothing there of what they hoped for. They see the same commonplace interests of the rest of life reflected there—invidious, institutional competitions for the saving of men's souls, and pride, self-congratulation, measuring successes by acquisition of numbers and authority. The language is often that of selling things in the market place or of politics. They hear in all this nothing but the voices of unchanged men and not that "mighty voice" of which the poet or prophet tells.

That voice is first heard, before it ever speaks any saving message, in a shattering judgment. It is Augustine's "judgment of the nations," which means, a judgment not only upon men but upon all their life, upon the institutions, pursuits, and activities of religion and education as well as of government.³ The churches come under it just as much as political states and nations. One must use the plural here in order to keep in mind the facts of our time. These agencies of "salvation" so-called are arrayed against each other exactly as nations are, and the same struggle seems taking place as in the political world. Indeed the churches appear as partisans in the world-wide embroilment. They have involved themselves because they, too, as human institutions have the secular interest, the interest both in self-preservation and in power.

What then is to be done? One thing is to be faithful to the insight that religion is a personal thing. Institutions

3. See Augustine, *City of God*; Christopher Dawson, *The Judgment of the Nations*; and Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* and *The Dilemma of Modern Man*.

serve as mediators of the tradition which is a passing on of the experience and ideas that men have had before. But the experience must be a contemporary thing and the man's own—a truth for which Kierkegaard is being well remembered today. There is what he called an "absolute" relationship between man and God and from that comes the consequent greater love of man for man which is likewise more inward and personal than one can ever acquire from any teaching by others or from ritual and ceremony. This is the thing we properly call religion. It is something simply to know that, and not to be misled by externals.

But a policy of life is required today for we have to think of a practical procedure. All institutions, "sacred" so-called or secular, are mixed up in a world struggle. What government can do to religion and education is too apparent to need mention. Education itself can affect both the politics of a nation and their religion. Churches get into politics surreptitiously if not openly. There is a vast, complicated interaction among these various agencies of human life. Ideally they are all needed, and all worthy of our allegiance, faith, and hope. Since they are all necessary together, none can be taken exclusively or in isolation. Taken together they have in the past made civilization possible. But the loyalties of men who are in such desperate need as today can easily lead people to place *all* their trust in some one of these institutions or agencies and set it up in a perpetual superiority over the others, to make it sovereign, so to speak. Then these differing sovereignties must necessarily clash. Hence there is bound to be an uneasy relationship among them. No concordat, so to speak, can last for long. In this situation the proper philosophy or policy would seem to be this: to see that there is always competition among them and never monopoly. No totalitarian claims allowed, in any quarter.

This sounds so very negative—what positive meaning is there in it? I will answer by repeating the exact words spoken in the last meeting we had with our students of philosophy in our Army University. It is an epilogue on freedom and on the value of philosophy.

EPILOGUE

“The freedom to think and discuss our thoughts with each other is so necessary for our salvation that nothing should stand in its way, no authority, political or religious, nor any scheming of interested parties nor the folly of those who use their liberty to talk about great subjects foolishly and recklessly, without considering that they should never jeopardize the right of all persons to freedom of thought. Education, state, and church must respect this free way of getting the wisdom we need. Believing and acting on this principle, we may find ourselves obliged to bring about reform in our system of education, our state, our armies, our churches, and our press and other media of communication. These institutions all claim a certain freedom for themselves. We have the right to demand that they shall always minister to our personal freedom and to our freedom as a people and to the freedom of all peoples. But in any struggle for this general order of freedom which shall be universal in every channel of human culture and in every place on the globe, we ought always to remember the wise ways of Socrates who was not impatient or angry but took abuse, and even death. Other philosophers like Spinoza also avoided the passions of bitterness and conflict. Plato tells us the philosopher must always be magnanimous—and that he will be, if he really has his eye on what is true and good and is not concerned with his own piety or victory. That is the true style of philosophy in human

life. If religion comes into man's experience as well, it should never mean that men cease to have these philosophic and civilized virtues of being fair, tolerant, and of large vision, seeing the whole of things."

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